A REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Tuesday, April 1. 1712.

WHEN we consider on what Punctilio's, either of Ceremony or Method, the weightyest Affairs of *Europe* depend, and how we are to have Nations Establish'd or not Establish'd, War, Fire, and Blood disperst throughout the World, or kindly stop'd by the Intervention of Peace; we cannot but bewail the wretched unhappy Fate of Mankind, that make such ado about the most trifling and inconsiderable Thing, that has neither Weight or Substance in it, and make Things of ten Thousand Times the Moment, be attendant upon, and Subjected to it.

When they make War, when Mischief is in their View, when Ambition prompts, when Revenge animates, when Opportunities to oppress a weak Neighbour offer, they stand upon no Ceremonies, they tye themselves to no Rules, obey no Measures, but fall on *without* Ceremony to God, or Civility to Men, without regard to Faith, Honour, Courtesie, Justice, or Humanity itself.

But when they are come together to heal this Bloody Breach, when they are to Negotiate the Propositions, Examin the Interests, Repair the Damage, and make up the Distracted Quarrels of the World; What

What Ceremony! what Punctilio's! what Niceties! what adjusting of Precedencies! what Conferences! whether the Coaches of this or that Prince's Ambassadors shall give Way! how the Footmen must behave! *and the like*; What mighty Debates about Receiving and Conducting! and whether the bottom of the Stairs or the top, shall confine their Civilities! How many nauseous Impertinences attend the Elbow Chair, and the giving of the Hand at Visits, *and the like!* And how often are the Conferences which they come about delay'd for several Days, and sometimes broke up, till these more Weighty Things are adjusted!

When they come together, innumerable Difficulties arise about who shall keep the *Protocol!* the granting Passports! the Form of these Passports, the Stile of their respective Princes! the Exchanging Powers! the Form of Treating, whether by Writing or Conference! *and the like* —— Are these Men met to put an End to a bloody War, to prevent the Ruin of Nations, the Burning of Cities, and the Destruction of People? Do these Men act as if they design'd to stop the Bleeding of *Europe*, or to check the Crimson Deluge? Merciful God! If thy gracious Providence had not more Compassion on Mankind than these wretched Politicians and Courtiers, to what Ruin and Destruction would the World be expos'd?

Do these Men know, that the Sun has pass'd the *Equator*, and is Advancing towards the *Tropick*? Do they see the Days Lengthening, the Season coming forward to Action? Do they hear the Drums beat a March? Do they think of the Armies coming into the Field, the Campaign beginning, and that every Day's delay may bring Blood and Devastation upon the World? *Do they consider*, that in one Day an Action may happen, in which the Lives of 20 or 30 Thousand may be lost? That *on one Hour of the Time*, which they throw away in foolish Forms, and dancing in the Circle of their Ridiculous Niceties, the Fate of *Europe* may depend?——— Or do they make a sport of Death, and divert themselves with the Miseries of Mankind? A Crime, which should make them abhorr'd of *Europe*, and should load them with the Reproach of the War here, and the Blood spilt in it hereafter.

And is all this of so little Consideration to us at this Time, that *Week* after *Week*, and *Conference* after *Conference* should be spent, to determine, *whether the French* shall give their Answers always in Writing, *or whether* an immediate *Negotiation* shall be begun? Why do these Men banter the World with the Notion of a Treaty, and send *Plenipotentiaries* to a Congress? Why mock the Minds of those, who groan under the Miseries of the War? —— Let them tell us in a few Words, whether we shall have Peace or War, that we may know what to trust to, what to expect, and that the poor Innocent Sufferers may not be Surprised.

If the *French* know their own Circumstances to stand in need of a Peace, and are, as I believe they have Reason, apprehensive of the Consequences of another Campaign, What do they mean by talking of three Weeks Time to give in their Answer? Why not in Writing, or any Way? For my part, I wish they had never given any Thing in, in Writing, on either Side, but proceeded by Conference from the Beginning; and by this Time, they might have talk'd it out one Way or other, and it would have been either off or on before now——— But if they must Treat by Writing, why can it not be done with more Dispatch? Either they are *Plenipotentiaries*, or they are not: But after all, if this be the Method they intend to go on in, for ought I can see, it will be but a Mock-Treaty at last.

I regard not in this, who is for or against a Peace, I only say, let them make a Peace or not make it, and amuse us no longer: If there are any, who setting a Treaty on Foot only for a Colour, resolve to have a Peace with *France*, let the Terms be what they will, and whether they can Honourably do or no, *I hope there are none such among us* —— As such Men *must be K——s*

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one Way, so this Way they *must be F—s*; for spinning out the Time in fruitless Contention about Trifles, is the Way to bring it all to nothing, and force them on to a War whether they would or no, and whether they have made Provision for it, or no.

If there are any, who secretly resolving to push on the War, and having been brought into a Treaty with Reluctance, in Compliment to a Circumstance which they were loth to push too far, but resolve to bring the War on, as a Consequence, by spinning out the Treaty in length, by insisting on every Thing they can, Cavilling, and Debating the Forms and Out-sides of Things, that so the End may be Confusion; if there are are any such, *(as God forbid) The Blood and Ruin of the War BE THEIRS, and of them may Heaven require it.*

If a good, a safe, a lasting, an honourable Peace *may be obtain'd for Europe*, let us see the Face of that Christian that dare own he would not much rather have it, than a War; *If this cannot be had*, if the *French* daily, trifle and double upon us, and will come to nothing that may be depended upon, Why do we continue any Treaty at all? Why do we not search into it, that an End may be put to the Delusion, and the War go on till they Comply? But to stand at gaze for a Ceremony, whether we shall Treat by Writing or by Word of Mouth, Shall the Fate of *Europe* turn upon this Trifle? Is not this a Question like that of ——*Whether the Button of the Hat should have been behind or before?* It is most absurd and ridiculous.

For my part, I wonder what *you People at U——* have been doing all this while, and cannot but think them all playing the F— with the World; tossing the Princes of *Europe* in a B——t, and making a Shuttlecock of the Fate of *Christendom*: What have they been doing, but spending Time in *the Farce* of Peace, making *a Comedy* of *a Negotiation*, that War may make up *the Tragedy* of *Europe* to come after it.

They have now spent six Weeks in Ridiculous Formalities, if I may call them so; one would think they were Pensioners to the *Gazetteers* and *Pamphleteers* of *Europe*, to find them News, and to give Papers to *on our Side*, and *on the other*, for the Scribblers of the Age to descant upon: *These*, one Side call *Insolent and Scandalous*; *Those*, the other Side call *Exorbitant and Absurd*. Showers of Banter and Ridicule fall *on our Side*, upon *the French* Specificks, the like Storm falls *from their Side*, upon our Specificks, which are call'd Mad Things among them: And now we must have more Writing; and Printing, and Bantering, and Scolding, *Is this a Treaty?* Is it a Treaty at *U——*, or is it a Treaty at the Printing-Houses of *Europe*? Are not our *Protestant*, and *Pagan Post-Boys*, our *Medleys* and *Examiners*, our *Observators*, ay, and your humble Servant the *Review* also, Are we not all *Plenipotentiaries? When the French give in their Proposals*, Have we not so long Time to give our Opinions? And are they not Printed, which is an Appeal to us, and all our dependent Readers, the Mob? When we have done, and spent our Vollies then the Specificks on *the Confederate Party's Side* come out—— And they are Printed and sent over to us, with a *See, Gentlemen, what brave Demands we have made? Pray let us have your Thoughts of them*; then to work we go with them: Mean while, the *French* take Time *to do the like*; and thus the Jest of a Treaty goes on, and may go on for eight Years longer, *as the Treaty of Westphalia did*; for certainly this is not the Way to bring it to a Conclusion.

Pray, Gentlemen, when would the Union have been made, if this had been the Method? —— How long must the *Czar* of *Muscovy's* Troops have Fasted, for they had no Bread, if the Peace between them and the *Turks* had been Treated of thus? How long must the *Swedish* Army have liv'd upon the poor *Saxons*, if the Treaty of *Alt-Ranstat* had been carried on thus? —— Is this the Thing you call a Treaty? Is this the Way to procure a Peace to *Europe*? In short, if I may plainly speak my Opinion, *without the least regard to Parties*, 'tis playing away the precious Moments that ought to bring us the happy Effect. Never let it

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stand upon Record for a Treaty; henceforth let it be called A NEW OPERA, *Never Acted before: Design'd for the Entertainment of the Servants of their Majesties, the Sovereign Princes of* Europe, *&c. To be seen at* U——— *twice a Week, from thence to be Transmitted to the Respective Nations, in order to make the World Mad.*

I cannot but think this something like a passage I once saw practised about a dying Man, who being very sick, sent for a *Consultation of Physicians* to consider of his Case; the Doctors spend the first two or three Hours in wiping their Shoes, considering which Foot to set first, when they went up Stairs, *&c.* Two Hours more were set apart for adjusting the Muff and the Laced Band, and other Dispositions of Artificial Gravity: Then being enter'd the Room, Debating the rest of the Time about their Seniority in the College, as to sitting down, *and the like*; these Essential Weighty Points being reteled, they *Resolved*, that they were met together IN THE NAME OF GOD, to Consult about such a Patients Condition, and so they adjourn'd to the next Day: Then Meeting again, they differ'd something about who shall first give his Opinion, and that took up some Hours more; then, whether they shall prescribe a-part, or Consult of one general Prescription; and not Resolving this, they appoint the Third Day for Conference; then being met again, the Debate arises, whether they should give their Opinions under their Hands, or only by Verbal Conference; about which, entering into a more serious Debate than before, a Message comes to them very gravely, in the Heat of their Dispute, That the Patient was Dead; and so the Assembly broke up, and they march off with good Fees in their Pockets, but nothing done to deserve any other Character, than that of *Ceremonious C*———*s*

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